

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I think my hon. friend is quite inaccurate in some of his statements.

The possibilities for the royal commission are quite impressive. When my hon. friend sees the names and the professional qualifications of those associated with the royal commission, he will be very well pleased. I know that transportation is for his area of Miramichi and for New Brunswick a particularly important issue.

I can give him the assurance that we will all be working together to make sure that what binds Canada, and has done so historically is strengthened and improved upon in the light of new transportation needs into the next century.

I conclude, Mr. Speaker, because my hon. friend is from New Brunswick, by referring him to a statement made by Mr. Pepin this morning. He said: "But to say, as the Premier of New Brunswick has said, that we need VIA in order to keep the country together is really romanticism, is really a dream. We have other ways of keeping the country together".

One of the ways we have of keeping the country together is by bringing about a sound competitive economy which will boost prosperity, increase productivity and create new wealth for all Canadians. That is what we are trying to do.

Mr. George Proud (Hillsborough): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport. Yesterday, P.E.I. lost its only remaining rail connection, a bus that runs from Charlottetown to Moncton. Some 28,000 passengers used this service last year, an increase of over 25 per cent from the previous year.

P.E.I. is now totally severed from the rest of Canada. Islanders and tourists cannot purchase a VIA ticket either to or from Prince Edward Island. This will have a great effect on tourism. Are we no longer considered a part of this country? Will the minister return this service to Prince Edward Island?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, we have made this decision in light of the national network. My friend knows very well that we are working at the present time on different options for Prince Edward Island in terms of keeping the link between the island and the mainland.

He also knows very well that in terms of the current system of transportation between Prince Edward Island and the mainland we have a very good ferry system. I believe that Prince Edward Island has not been deserted by the decision yesterday.

* * *

COMMENTS OF FINANCE COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I think the Prime Minister knows that he and I can share humour on the proper occasion and exchange a barb at each other's expense when that is appropriate and relevant. But I do not think members of the House, certainly on this side, would agree with his response to the question from our colleague for Kamloops.

The member of Parliament for Mississauga South, who is the chairman of the finance committee of the House of Commons is representing this place across the country in Vancouver and in Alberta.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Have you read his statement?

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): I have read transcripts of his statement.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Have you read the whole statement?

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): I have read transcripts of his statement. In the last two weeks he has said to the people of Newfoundland, when he was discussing the itinerary of his committee, that it is not worth public money to go to the province of Newfoundland to hear what the citizens have to say out there. Now he has said to the people of Alberta that they are ignorant, that they need education at the grade five level, and that their evidence is not worthy of being listened to.

Whatever the Prime Minister may think of his own problems with the member for Mississauga South, by refusing to repudiate the member he is condoning what that member is saying. I urge him to reconsider on the floor of the House of Commons.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the statement by my right hon. friend that I am condoning what a member says is quite inappropriate.

Mr. Fulton: You sure did.